

Strategic Plan: FY 2020 – 2025



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Dakota
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Council on the Arts

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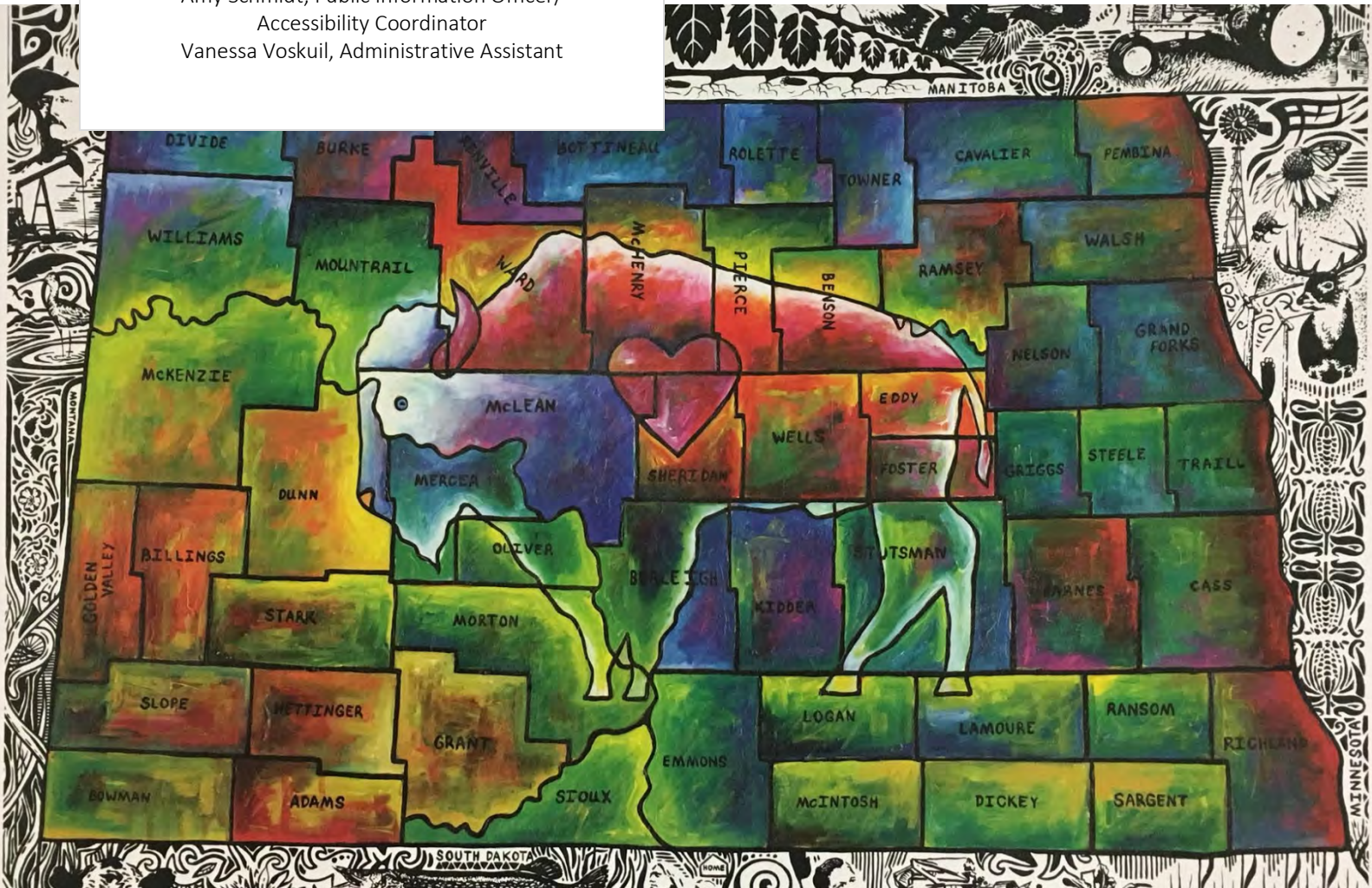
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Introduction

On behalf of the North Dakota Council on the Arts (NDCA) board and staff, we are pleased to present our Strategic Plan for FY 2020-2025.

In 1967, the North Dakota State Legislature created a council on the arts. In doing so, it proclaimed that North Dakotans should have the opportunity to enjoy and participate in the arts, that recognition of the arts would improve the general welfare, and that the state should ensure that the arts grow. The Legislature has reaffirmed this commitment with renewed funding every session.

Since that time, research has reinforced the important role arts and culture plays in state economic vitality, community quality of life, and individual health.

The purpose of the North Dakota Council on the Arts is to bring the legislature's commitment to life so that all North Dakotans can reap those benefits.

This plan begins at a moment of agency transformation – one in which:

- We are proud of our programs and what they have accomplished in the past, and we are enthusiastic so see how they might change in the future.
- We have an operating model that is labor intensive and funding that has been keeping up but not growing. We see this as an opportunity to innovate.
- We have gone through leadership changes in recent years. We see such changes as opportunities for new thinking going forward.

This is a comprehensive plan driven by the voices, stories and energy of hundreds of North Dakotans. It encapsulates everything – all we do now, as well as the changes we wish to make.

It is also a long-range plan addressing the first five years in a ten-year journey of agency and field development. We will build our capacity to gather and analyze meaningful data, to evaluate impact, and to revitalize and transform as an agency ready to experiment, innovate and lead our state forward. This plan is our opportunity to prepare for the next 50 years as North Dakota's Council on the Arts.



David "White Thunder" Trottier
Board Chair

Kim Konikow
Executive Director

North Dakota State Legislature Commitment to the Arts

It is the finding of the legislative assembly that many of our citizens lack the opportunity to view, enjoy, or participate in living theatrical performances, musical concerts, operas, dance and ballet recitals, art exhibits, examples of fine architecture, and the performing and fine arts generally. It is further found that, with increasing leisure time, the practice and enjoyment of the arts are of increasing importance and that

the general welfare of the people of the state will be promoted by giving further recognition to the arts as a vital aspect of our culture and heritage and as a valued means of expanding the scope of our educational programs.

It is declared to be the policy of the state to join with private patrons and with institutions and professional organizations concerned with the arts to ensure that the role of the arts in the life of our communities will continue to grow and will play an evermore significant part in the welfare and educational experience of our citizens

Excerpt from North Dakota Century Code, CHAPTER 54-54:
COUNCIL ON THE ARTS, 01. Legislative purpose and policy

North Dakota's commitment to arts and culture,
ensures healthy people,
creates vibrant communities, and
supports a 21st century state economy.



Our Core

Mission

The North Dakota State Legislature created the North Dakota Council on the Arts “to ensure that the role of the arts in the life of our communities will continue to grow and will play an evermore significant part in the welfare and educational experience of our citizens.” Our purpose is to bring that commitment to life.

**We strengthen the creative capacity of North Dakota for all who live and visit here:
honoring our cultural traditions, empowering excellence and innovation,
inspiring arts and culture opportunities for all.**

What We Do

As a state arts agency, our role is to support creators, art providers, and participants. We use grants, convening, education, and partnerships to:

- Seed new ideas and activity
- Build resilient capacity for the long-term

To do this well, we must balance our investments:

- With organizations, artists, educators, and communities
- For broad geographic reach with deep engagement
- To sustain ongoing work and build new capacity
- For flexible response to ongoing and emerging needs

Beliefs & Values

Inspiring our mission are these deeply held beliefs:

- Art tells our stories – individually and as a state
- Art, culture and creativity, by and for the community, have the power to:
 - Inspire and enhance lives
 - Build community and transform its spaces
 - Lift up, heal, and unite across divides
- Everyone deserves equal access to a full, vibrant creative life, which is essential to a healthy and democratic society

We hold ourselves accountable to the people of North Dakota and the trust placed in us. Because of this we:

- Pursue excellence and innovation in all things
- Pursue cultural equity throughout the state
- Engage our state through fair and transparent processes

Art’s impact radiates across communities. As it does so, it changes minds. At its best, it changes everything.





Vision 2030

The planning process asked our community to describe an ideal future. They responded with this view of 2030 and beyond:

A North Dakota that is the best state to live in.

We are experiencing a rural renaissance – bringing new life to community, buildings, and education

Our population has grown, as has our representation in Congress

We are increasingly active, diverse, inclusive and connected

Opportunities have expanded with green careers, energy, and infrastructure gains

Our downtowns and business are thriving, and our rural communities are vibrant economies

We have made positive climate progress and protected open spaces

And our arts:

Are experiencing a renaissance in which cities, towns and rural communities revitalize themselves through the power of art

Are generously encouraged, supported, and protected across the state

Ecosystem benefits from a common vision and daily collaboration

Tell the story of North Dakota, its people, as well as its arts, culture and creativity – and the world listens

Embrace and lift up our diverse cultural heritage

Then we asked ourselves – NDCA board and staff – the same question. We described:

An agency that:

Is the leader doing innovative, imaginative work

- As the “go-to” for arts and culture information
- With innovative, nationally recognized and replicated programs

Produces a clear return on Legislative investment

- Efficiently getting the work done with an empowered staff
- Continually innovating with active planning and evaluation
- Leveraging public dollars to generate earned income and local arts funding and to increase revenues through public/private partnerships

Excels at creating diverse, strong partnerships

- That reduce barriers to participation in the arts
- Built on deep connections with all artists and arts organizations throughout the state

Connects with programs that use creativity for transformation

- In every school and district in the state
- Cultivating Art for Life programs around the state

Embraces change with an invested and active Board, fair access to all, and fiscal accountability

For a North Dakota in which:

Artistic quality is honored and valued for its role as diverse community members add richness to the lives of all citizens

Artists are valued in communities and encouraged in their work

The creative arts are an essential educational tool

All walks of life are aware and able to take advantage of arts opportunities and benefits

State agencies, businesses, organizations, and the general public partner with arts to build our economy and enhance daily life

North Dakota arts and culture:

- Reach communities throughout the state
- Contribute to small business health
- Enhance the creativity crucial to success
- Drive vibrant, welcoming and desirable communities

Bringing those pieces together, we are pursuing:

**A North Dakota in which all can experience arts and culture.
All can participate; all are welcome; and arts and culture thrive.**



Strategic Direction

We will pursue goals that advance our mission for people and communities, the field, and internal goals that advance the agency.

Art & Creative Process for All	
Goal 1 Working toward a North Dakota in which all can experience arts and culture – diversity of tradition, of genre, of exposure. All can participate. All are welcome.	
Vibrant Communities	
Goal 2 Regions, cities, communities, and networks across the state appreciate the power of the arts. They use that power to enhance the vitality of North Dakota. They celebrate the vibrant communities that result, each with arts, creativity and culture at their core.	
Thriving Arts Ecosystem	
Goal 3 NDCA, communities, organizations, artists, and educators thrive in an interdependent, mutually supported system. Each has resilient capacity aligned for impact.	
Excellence & Innovation	
Goal 4 NDCA models excellence and innovation for the field. It sustains its gains through self-reflection, evaluation and continuous improvement. Its innovative partnerships open doors to greater influence and impact, increase its efficiency, and leverage its resources.	

As described in the introduction, this is a transformational moment for NDCA. We have developed a big plan for advancing NDCA as an agency and pursuing high aspirations. To reach our goals we will have to take time to experiment, build our evaluative capacity, and learn, just as our grantees will. This work adds time to what might otherwise be a three-five year plan. In fact, we believe that we now have our focus on a horizon of as many as 10 years into the future.

Because of this we identify three strategic priorities for 2020-2022:

1. Program Assessment (p. 15)
2. Board & Staff Capacity Alignment (p. 15)
3. Statewide Public Art Initiative (p. 11)

Goals & Strategies

GOAL 1: Art & Creative Process for All

VISION

Because we believe that everyone deserves equal access to a full, vibrant creative life, our vision here is ambitious. We are working toward a North Dakota in which all can experience arts and culture – diversity of tradition, of genre, of exposure. All can participate. All are welcome.

Implementation Strategies

A Cultural Equity

North Dakota’s cultural heritage spans continents and thousands of years. As such cultural equity is essential, we must champion policies and practices that empower a diverse, inclusive, and equitable state where cultural equity is visible to all. We will:

- 1) Lead the way, embedding cultural equity into NDCA processes and expectations
- 2) Lift up folk and traditional arts through our apprenticeship and folklore programs
- 3) Partner with Tribal Nations and Native-led organizations to honor North Dakota’s indigenous heritage
- 4) Look for opportunities to lift up New American and immigrant creativity

B Accessibility & Inclusion for All

NDCA has made a mark nationally with its Art for Life program. Building on this, we will continue to link art to health, healing and life-long learning – ensuring that access and inclusion practices are integrated at all levels of our arts ecosystem:

- 1) Deepen the impact of the Art for Life program
- 2) Advance accessibility in the day-to-day work of our grantees and ourselves
- 3) Experiment with opportunities to make this link as they emerge in other areas, for example those serving veterans, persons in recovery, formerly and incarcerated persons, or educational systems
- 4) Develop a North Dakota approach to embedding creative arts in pre-k – 12 schools across the state using our grant programs, convening, capacity building, and partnerships

C Rural & Geographically Underserved Communities

North Dakota is a big state. If we are to do more across the state, we must ensure that we are reaching rural and geographically underserved communities.¹ We will:

- 1) Assess the access needs and geographic gaps of underserved communities
- 2) Target opportunities to grant, partner, and build capacity in response to those needs:
 - i) Supporting art in schools (pre-k-12)
 - ii) Seeding new capacity, supporting emerging capacity (e.g., visionary partners organizations, artists, and educators) and sustaining existing capacity
- 3) Refine our grant programs (e.g., Special Project and Community Arts Access) to expand their impact and reach into rural and underserved communities

¹ The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) identifies underserved communities as those “in which individuals lack access to arts programs due to geography, economic conditions, ethnic background or disability.”

Equity & Cultural Equity

“Equity” is the “fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.”

“Cultural equity” “embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people... are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.”

*(Definitions for “equity” as used by Independent Sector:
<https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/>;*

*for “creative equity” as used in the Americans for the Arts “Statement on Cultural Equity”
<https://www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/cultural-equity/>)*

Access or Inclusion

“Access” is the capacity of everyone to be included in all programs and activities. To borrow from Createquity “when we speak of ‘access,’ we do not just mean opportunities to experience art as an audience member; we also include access to artistic training and related resources.”

“Inclusion” is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.

(Quote from <http://createquity.com/issue/participation/>)

Arts Participation

Participation can be viewed narrowly or broadly. The definition we use adopts Alan Brown’s five categories below:

- **Inventive** engages the mind, body, and spirit in an act of artistic creation that is unique and idiosyncratic, regardless of skill level.
- **Interpretive** is a creative act of self-expression that brings alive and adds value to pre-existing works, individually or collaboratively.
- **Curatorial** is the creative act of purposefully selecting, organizing, and collecting art to the satisfaction of one’s own sensibility.
- **Observational** encompasses arts experiences that an individual selects or consents to, motivated by some expectation of value.
- **Ambient** involves experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, that is not purposefully selected—art that “happens to you.”

(From “A Fresh Look at Arts Participation,” www.wolfbrown.com)



Folk & Traditional Arts Apprenticeship



Art for Life



Governor’s Award for the Arts

GOAL 2: Vibrant Communities

VISION

Regions, cities, communities, and networks across the state appreciate the power of the arts. They use that power to enhance the vitality of North Dakota. They celebrate the vibrant communities that result, each with arts, creativity and culture at their core.

Implementation Strategies

A Creative Placemaking for Change

Throughout the planning process, external and internal stakeholders suggested that NDCA use public art as a catalyst for creative, community development. We believe that it will be the most effective next step in activating creative, community development that uses the power of art to enhance the vitality of North Dakota. We will:

- 1) Implement “Creative Placemaking – Joining ND’s Eight Regions,” our statewide public art initiative (p. 11)
- 2) Align future capacity building with the results of the initiative

B Creative, Community Development

Resilient change in community requires deep engagement on the ground. This requires us to be more than grantmakers. We must be visible, engaged partners in the systems we want to influence. We will:

- 1) Engage state, regional and national networks
- 2) Position arts as essential to planning and policy bodies tied to quality of life
 - i) Empowering the field to tell influential stories that educate decision-makers
 - ii) Communicating with and educating decision-makers on behalf of the field
 - iii) Building relationships as a go-to advisor to elected and business officials, local and state agencies, and communities

Resilient change also requires buy-in for the people and communities of North Dakota to celebrate and include the arts, just as the arts celebrate and include the people and communities of North Dakota.

C Influential Stories Celebrating the Arts

The planning process began with a focus on the stories we tell about art and that art tells about North Dakota. Ultimately, the story of North Dakota arts, creativity and culture will shift. We will:

- 1) Tell influential stories that are data-driven, evaluative, evocative – both within NDCA and across the state:
 - i) Develop our capacity to measure and evaluate our work and its impact
 - ii) Revitalize our formal communication content and mechanisms (e.g., website)
- 2) Build the capacity of grantees to tell their stories directly
- 3) Engage story-telling partners in deliberate, regular activity, for example:
 - i) Nonprofits such as Prairie Public Broadcasting and Makoché Studios
 - ii) State agencies such as Tourism, Commerce, and Parks & Recreation
- 4) Use exhibitions and celebrations to engage communities, for example:
 - i) Governor's Award for the Arts
 - ii) Featured exhibitions at the Capital
 - iii) NDCA at the Heritage Center (State Historical Society)

What is Public Art?

Public art is not an art 'form.'

"Its size can be huge or small. It can tower fifty feet high or call attention to the paving beneath your feet. Its shape can be abstract or realistic (or both), and it may be cast, carved, built, assembled, or painted. It can be site-specific or stand in contrast to its surroundings.

What distinguishes public art is the unique association of how it is made, where it is, and what it means.

Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions.

Placed in public sites, this art is there for everyone, a form of collective community expression.

Public art is a reflection of how we see the world – the artist's response to our time and place combined with our own sense of who we are."

(Quote from www.associationforpublicart.org)

2020-2022 Strategic Priority

Public Art & Creative Placemaking Initiative

Creative Placemaking – Joining ND's Eight Regions will develop public art projects connected with the particular cultural heritage of North Dakota's eight regions – catalyzing creative, community development that promotes unity, collaboration, art-driven economic development, and tourism. Initiative phases will roll out as follows:

2019: Priming the Work

- Begin education via "Arts, Culture & Community Vibrancy" panels and a rural art and community workshop at the Main Street Initiative Summit
- Begin a conversation with the field regarding potential benefits of a statewide public art project (with Jack Becker, Forecast Public Art, MN)
- Secure funding for subsequent phases

2020-21: Engagement & Planning

- Form a planning committee
- Convene eight work groups (one per region) to plan each public art project
- Support groups with online meetings and visits that engage each region
- Educate and engage decision-makers so that they understand and support the work

2021-24: Capacity Building & Project Implementation ²

- Sponsor professional development (e.g., planning, artist selection, maintenance) to inform group work
- Sponsor technical assistance to support project implementation on the ground

2024-25: Evaluation & Celebration

- Market the eight artworks together in partnership with State Tourism
- Measure initiative impact and report thorough evaluation

² Professional Development (PD) or Technical Assistance (TA) –

PD is training and related support designed to move an *individual* forward in their professional capacity, developing new knowledge and skill.

TA is consultative support designed to move an *organization* forward, developing new capacity or problem-solving.

GOAL 3: Thriving Arts Ecosystem

VISION

NDCA, communities, organizations, artists, and educators thrive in an interdependent, mutually supported, system. Each has resilient capacity aligned for impact. The ecosystem is visible in communities (festivals, fairs, local products and leaders), in the forward-thinking, and external community engagement of organizations, in the economic success and recognition of artists, and in pre-k – 12 schools with creative arts education.

Implementation Strategies

A Policy-Level Capacity

On our ecosystem model, cultural policy, funding and systems sit at the top either facilitating or hindering the work. We will ensure the former is true. Specifically, we will:

- 1) Directly communicate with and educate decision-makers on behalf of the field
- 2) Empower the field to tell influential stories that educate decision-makers
- 3) Build NDCA's internal capacity for excellence and innovation

B Arts Community Capacity

Capacity here is about the community of artists, arts leaders, and arts organizations across the state and their ability to do the work. We will:

- 1) Convene statewide education and networking events in alternating years
- 2) Develop regional convenings that make capacity-building more accessible and visible throughout the state

C Organizational Capacity

Goal 1 details our plan to build organizational capacity for ensuring access, equity and inclusion. In addition, we will target topics related to organizational health:

- 1) Expand professional development for individual leaders and technical assistance for organizations and communities for greater access, reach and impact. For example:
 - i) Using online delivery mechanisms where most effective
 - ii) Going into smaller communities when seeding new efforts
 - iii) Emphasizing specific needs as they emerge (e.g., succession planning)
- 2) Refine grant programs (e.g., Institutional Support) to deepen organizational impact

D Artist Capacity

Traditionally, funders have built arts capacity through organizations, trusting that they would support the artist. In the 21st century we focus much more on the individual with the gig economy and makerspaces. Artists are asking for more direct assistance. We will:

- 1) Pursue strategies similar to those for organizational capacity above (C.1.)
- 2) Partner with local efforts that expand creative art opportunities (e.g., Makewell, Native American Development Center)

A Creative Arts Capacity in Education

We believe that arts education should be available in every school. To achieve this, we must pursue comprehensive, ecosystem strategies similar to those above. We will:

- 1) Build system-wide capacity for creative arts in pre-k – 12 schools
 - i) Continue support of emerging statewide arts education associations
 - ii) Partner with regional cooperatives and higher education (e.g., CREA, SEEC)
- 2) Expand the reach and diversity of grant programs (e.g., Artists in Residence, Arts in Education Collaboration) and of PD to address specific needs

What is creative capacity?

NDCA strengthens the creative capacity of North Dakota. We believe that “creative capacity” encompasses an openness to art and culture, the opportunities to engage in art, as well as the ability to create more. It includes five types of participation (p. 9):

- Inventive
- Interpretive
- Curatorial
- Observational
- Ambient

What is an ecosystem?

“An ecosystem is a geographic area where plants, animals, and other organisms, as well as weather and landscapes, work together to form a bubble of life.”

(From www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/)

Putting them together

Creative capacity is found in individuals, organizations and networks, communities, and our state policies. It is supported by educational capacity found in teachers, schools, school districts, and again, state policies.

The needs of each vary. For example, organizations need program capacity but they also need strong “table legs” as depicted to the right.

For our work to be successful, each of these must be resilient. Each is dependent on something from the others. And together they are only as strong as the weakest link in the system.

We view them as ecosystems that must thrive. Ensuring that they do just that, is core to success.

Arts & Culture Ecosystem

4 interdependent elements x 2



Ecosystem adapted from



What is organizational capacity?

Source: *NONPROFIT LIFECYCLES: Stage-based Wisdom for Nonprofit Capacity*, Susan Kenny Stevens Ph.D.

It is the “table legs” that support mission and programs



GOAL 4: Excellence & Innovation

VISION

NDCA models excellence and innovation for the field. NDCA sustains its gains through self-reflection, evaluation and continuous improvement. Its innovative partnerships open doors to greater influence and impact, increase its efficiency, and leverage its resources.

Implementation Strategies

A Culture of Excellence & Innovation

If we are to model change for the field and fulfill our journey of innovative, rewarding work and leadership we need to develop internally.

- 1) **INQUIRY:** Our systems must be efficient for staff and welcoming to potential grantees and partners in order to support robust and stable programs. We will:
 - i) Annually adapt this plan as a living active guide in our work
 - ii) Prioritize time for robust conversations and reflection, continually question our assumptions in search of increased efficiency
- 2) **EVALUATIVE THINKING:** We need to develop our capacity to measure and evaluate our work and its impact. This is a key component in implementing this plan. We will:
 - i) Improve evaluation plans and systems for each of our programs
 - ii) Integrate those strategies into the culture of the agency
 - iii) Gather relevant, accessible data that allows us to tell the story without overburdening grantees

B Transformative Relationships

Our success depends on deep relationships – internal and external – that build capacity. Rather than being transactional (a grant, a process, or an activity), they must continue and transform. Such partnerships take us into different realms, widen visibility for North Dakota art, and invariably open the door to creative opportunity. We will continue to:

- 1) **INTERNAL:** Develop and maintain a culture of:
 - i) Productive partnerships among staff, among directors, and between the two
 - ii) Rewarding work and honoring the investment of board and staff
- 2) **THE FIELD:** Build external relationships that meet the field where they are:
 - i) Bringing the arts community together
 - ii) Engaging the arts community directly – go to them
 - iii) Teaching the field to fish – do "with" not "for" – so that ideas can develop into more successful grant relationships
- 3) **PARTNERS:** Deepen emerging partnerships, emphasizing those that:
 - i) Cross-pollinate ideas
 - ii) Expose the public to North Dakota art and culture
 - iii) Increase access to art and art process
 - iv) Lead to creative, community development
 - v) Build ecosystem capacity
- 4) **DECISION-MAKERS:** Develop relationships as a go-to advisor to elected and business officials, local and state agencies, and communities

C Internal Capacity Allocation

Revitalizing and aligning our internal capacity will enhance our efficiency and impact.

- 1) **GOVERNANCE:** Effective rewarding work depends on a knowledgeable Board of Directors that has clarity and consistency of purpose. We will:
 - i) Recruit knowledgeable board members and support excellent governance
 - ii) Actively engage board members in the field
 - iii) Refresh and maintain current policies and bylaws
- 2) **STAFFING & MANAGEMENT:** Innovative, rewarding work and leadership depends on our continuous learning, imagination and flexibility as a staff. We need to model change for the field. We will:
 - i) Expand agency staffing, aligning structure and roles to current and future needs
 - ii) Prioritize time and attention on multi-year goal horizons over tasks
 - (1) To develop our evaluative capacity
 - (2) For board and staff to be in the community
 - (3) For staff professional development and agency advancement
- 3) **FUNDING NORTH DAKOTA ART, CULTURE & CREATIVITY:** We need sufficient funds and strong fiscal stewardship to do our work. We will:
 - i) Grow North Dakota and National Endowment for the Arts investments
 - ii) Encourage new private funder investment while developing earned revenue
 - iii) Refine fiscal management tools

2020-2022 Strategic Priorities

Program Assessment, Board & Staff Alignment

NDCA's operating model is based on granting that is labor intensive for a small staff. We must make our programs as efficient and effective as possible both for NDCA staff and for those we support in the field. It is clear that we have to simplify our grant programs and multiple deadlines.

We will prioritize an agency-wide assessment of programs over the first 12-18 months of plan implementation, followed by revisions to:

- 1) Grant deadlines and timelines
- 2) Grant guidelines and data requests
- 4) Grant software and application process

As we are working on programs, we will be working on board and staff capacity, aligning the work, shifting roles as appropriate, and building new capacity. This will also be a priority for the first two years of the plan.

As a result, the field will see NDCA on the road more often, experimenting with new program delivery (e.g., grant webinars), and asking new questions as the agency does this strategic work.

The Planning Process

Planning launched in February 2019. Our consultant began with an agency assessment through desk review of agency documents and data, internal interviews with board and staff, work sessions with the Executive Director, and a full staff retreat.

Field Engagement

This was quickly followed by extensive field engagement as follows:

Listening Tour

NDCA conducted a statewide listening tour that began in April 2018 and continued through July 2019. Our partnership with the Governor's statewide Main Street Initiative allowed us to expand the tour with additional visits in regional road trips across the state.

The tour included 40+ meetings spanning 25+ cities, 20+ counties, all eight regions, and two reservations.

The tour reached into communities as large as Fargo and as small as Pekin with its 64 residents. In fact, 14 of the meetings were in communities with fewer than 2,000 people, while only seven were in ones over 20,000.

The tour included well over 650 participants including a cross section of arts/heritage/cultural leaders, individual artists, arts educators and students, volunteers, civic leaders, economic development leaders, health and welfare leaders, city government leaders, and community foundations. It even attracted 16 legislators.

Gatherings also reflected the perspectives of underserved constituents such as those from rural communities, the elderly, new Americans, immigrants and refugees, and members of several Native reservations.

By the end, the tour had identified key themes addressed in this plan including the need:

- To better understand programs and opportunities
- To mitigate geographic isolation
- For more funds in the state and fundraising training
- For capacity building related to planning, succession, board development, and facilities

Interviews

We interviewed external informants as a counter-balance to the internal perspectives of board and staff. Those conversations explored:

- The health and needs of North Dakota artists, arts organizations, and community partners
- NDCA's impact on and role in those communities
- Envisioning an ideal future for NDCA, creativity, and the arts in North Dakota
- Creative ways NDCA might enhance state vitality through the arts



A vision of North Dakota; mosaic created by artist Molly McLain, from participant's post-it notes and drawings at the 2019 Statewide Arts Convening.

- Influences that could help or hinder NDCA progress
- Potential changes in state arts funding

In total, this stage included 22 interviews (Donna Collins, Ohio Arts Council; Dayna Del Val, The Arts Partnership; Brenna Gerhardt, Humanities ND; Barbara Gravel, Prairie Public Broadcasting; Holly Holt, formerly of the Main Street Initiative of North Dakota Commerce; Sally Jeppson, The Jamestown Arts Center; Jan Webb, formerly of NDCA; NDCA staff and board).

Interviewees applauded NDCA and its work, especially the partnerships being developed by the current executive director. Because of those relationships many of the interviewees expressed interest in expanding their work together and/or offering support to NDCA along the way.

Field Survey

We administered an online survey with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA) in April 2019. Survey distribution reached out to more than 1,400 individuals including the full breadth of our constituents, as well as mailing lists from other organizations. This allowed for a wide geographic reach across the state, for NDCA to learn from different types of known stakeholders, and to better analyze responses from each of these groups. The 314 respondents included artists, arts organizations, arts educators and other relevant organizations from every region in North Dakota.

The survey also affirmed our understanding of field composition, how it engages with NDCA, how it uses NDCA support, and where it needs assistance. (The survey report is available on the NDCA website.)

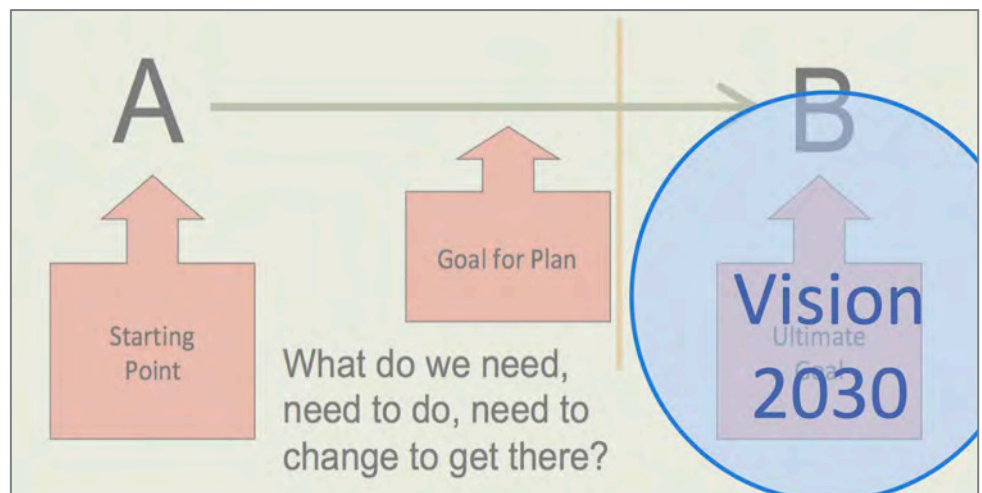
Statewide Convening

Finally, 100 participants attending our Statewide Convening (March 2019) engaged in an exercise that is captured in the vision of this plan. The convening reaffirmed much of what we heard on the listening tour, adding a focus on both the stories we tell ourselves and North Dakota, and the stories North Dakota tells itself about its arts and culture.

Plan Development

Planning began in earnest immediately after the convening closed. The NDCA board and staff began with our own visioning process. We also identified critical issues for the plan to address and brainstormed specific changes that might be put into place.

In May, board and staff reconvened to review the results of the field survey and set a strategic direction for the next five years. The mission, beliefs and goals of this plan came from that work.



Throughout the summer that followed, our planning consultant, staff and board went through several iterations of the plan as we collectively refined and focused language and goals.

The board of directors unanimously approved this plan at its October 2019 meeting.

We are proud of the result – the voices, stories and energy of well over one-thousand North Dakotans – contained here.

Acknowledgements

Thank you!

For your support and input during the process

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Each of the 650+ listening tour participants, 100 convening attendees, 314 field survey participants, and the organizations and communities they represent

Former NDCA Board of Directors:

Terry Jelsing (Region 2, Rugby)

Dr. Cynthia Lindquist (Region 3, Fort Totten)

Brad Bachmeier (Region 5, Fargo)

Marilyn Lee (Region 8, South Heart)

The NDCA Staff who live the work every day

Art Credits

Cover	<i>Pheasants on the Prairie, Gary Greff (Regent ND)</i>
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